



## ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

# News Release

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### **CITY OF SAN DIEGO MAYOR DICK MURPHY FLIPS SOLAR SWITCH ON WORLD RENOWNED RIDGEHAVEN GREEN BUILDING**

*City Uses Renewable Energy to Pursue Energy Independence*

**SAN DIEGO, CA**— City of San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy and Councilmembers Michael Zucchet and Donna Frye helped officially commission the City's most energy-efficient and environmentally sensitive municipal structure, the Ridgehaven "Green" Building, to operate on solar energy during a dedication ceremony on Friday, June 20, 2003 at 12:30 p.m. The installation of the Ridgehaven Building's solar electric system marks it as the City's second facility to be fitted with a solar array and generate on-site electricity. The Ridgehaven's solar array features a state-of-the-art solar electric rooftop and carport system which generates approximately 53 kW(ac) daily and is enough energy to power more than 70 homes during the day.

"Pursing energy independence is one of my 10 goals for the City of San Diego and our use of solar power is paving the way to achieving this goal as well as saving operating costs," said City of San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy. "Through the installation of the solar array on the Ridgehaven Building, the City will save \$11,600 or more each year and potentially as much as \$300,000 during the life of the solar array. With more efficient "green" buildings like Ridgehaven, we can improve building environments, conserve natural resources, and enhance our quality of life, thus ensuring an environmentally sustainable future."

In 1996, the City completed an extensive two year energy-efficient retrofit and remodel on the Ridgehaven "Green" Building which transformed it into one of the nation's most energy-efficient buildings today. In 1999, after operating for three years as the headquarters to the Environmental

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Services Department (ESD), it was selected as the first building in the nation to earn the US Department of Energy's and the US Environmental Protection Agency's prestigious Energy Star Label. Since the original retrofit, the building's energy use has reduced by 69 percent and with the addition of the new solar electric system Ridgehaven will now be approximately 83 percent more energy efficient than before.

The Ridgehaven's Building's 6,500 square foot solar array makes innovative use of unused assets —the building and carport rooftops — to generate on-site electricity. Ridgehaven's entire solar system is comprised of 442 solar electric panels on the building's rooftop that generate 50 kW (ac) and 96 solar electric panels on the carport that generate 3 kW (ac). The solar array will produce a projected annual electrical output of 80,702 kWh and will provide 14 percent of the facilities' energy needs throughout the year including times of highest demand such as the hot summer months.

In addition to generating electricity, the rooftop system is virtually maintenance free and will provide insulation for the Ridgehaven Building which will help reduce the cost of heating and air conditioning. The rooftop array also serves as protection for the roof, thus decreasing the need for repairs.

Ridgehaven's newly installed solar array will also offer many environmental benefits during its projected lifetime of 25 years. During the life of the system the amount of solar electricity generated will reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by almost 480 tons which is equivalent to planting almost 135 acres of trees, removing almost 100 cars, or not driving 1.2 million miles on the San Diego roadways.

While the Ridgehaven building is the second City building to be fitted with a solar array, in October 2002 the Environmental Services Department's Miramar Operations Station administration building was the City's first building to be converted to function entirely on solar powered generated on-site. This building's carport was fitted with 468 solar electric panels which generate more energy than the building uses in one year and saves the City approximately \$16,500 in operational costs.

"Upfront costs to install solar panels are significant and the payback period can be as long as 25 years but I believe it is a wise use of City dollars," said Murphy. "There is a limited supply of fossil fuels and burning these fuels can have enormous long-term damaging impacts on our air quality. When you measure potential costs associated with managing future health problems that could arise from decreased air quality to the dollars we spend now to install solar electric systems that will not produce harmful emissions, it is clear this investment will be less costly and have huge long-term benefits."

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The City's use of solar electricity will help increase the reliability of the region's electric system by diversifying the power supply, offsetting peak demand, and shielding San Diego from price volatility. Solar transforms sunshine into electricity during the day — when it's needed most, when it's most costly and when the grid is under the greatest constraints.

The new Ridgehaven solar array is funded in part with incentives provided by the California Energy Commission's Emerging Renewables Program and the funds are administered through the San Diego Regional Energy Office. The City will receive \$283,363 for the installation of the Ridgehaven solar array and \$275,760 for the Miramar Operation's Station solar carport installation.

The City of San Diego's Environmental Services Department is charged with refuse collection and disposal, recycling and environmentally sound landfill management to meet the City's long-term disposal needs. The Department also oversees the City's management of energy use and explores innovative options for energy independence. For more information on recycling or Environmental Services, visit the department's web site at <http://www.sandiego/environmental-services/>.

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